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ABSTRACT

In November 1994, the U.S. Department of Education invited a group of exceptional public and private school teachers (n=114) to Washington, D.C., to hear their thoughts and to explore ways in which the federal government can work with educators to achieve the National Education Goals. The teachers centered on two dimensions of the time challenge: "What time barriers must be overcome?" and "How can time be restructured?" The participants identified the following barriers to time: teacher isolation, school-day design, top-down thinking, slowness in responding to research, the need for family and community involvement, inadequate student assessment, and the demand for continual improvement. Teachers offered the following solutions to the time bind: (1) Focus on student learning as the constant and time as the variable; (2) create more flexibility rather than more instructional time; (3) realize that increasing planning time for teachers is more important for improving instruction than increasing instructional time with students; (4) encourage attitudinal change along with structural change; (5) involve teachers as policy-making partners in any solutions to the time problem; and (6) connect the issues of time and school reform. The document also lists eight recommendations made by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning's April 1994 report, "Prisoners of Time." A list of participating teachers is included. (LMI)

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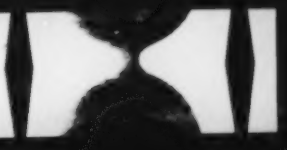
BREAKING THE TYRANNY OF TIME

Voices from the Goals 2000 Teacher Forum



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BREAKING THE TYRANNY OF TIME

Voices from the Goals 2000 Teacher Forum

November 1994

U.S. Department of Education
Washington, D.C.

Richard W. Riley
Secretary

Therese Knecht Dozier
Special Advisor on Teaching

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Foreword

The Clinton Administration is dedicated to providing a world-class education for every child in America. It is, therefore, critical to tap the knowledge, experience, and insight that teachers have gained as classroom practitioners. That is why one of the first steps I took as Secretary of Education was to appoint Terry Dozier, a practicing classroom teacher and former National Teacher of the Year, as my special advisor.

I am committed to the importance of honoring what teachers know and listening to what they say. I want to ensure an ongoing dialogue between teachers and the Department as the Administration develops and implements critical education policy. The President and I know that all too often past efforts to improve education have viewed teachers as objects of reform, rather than partners in reform. The Goals 2000 Teacher Forum is a direct result of the Department's desire to change this attitude and to actively engage teachers at all levels of change.

In November 1994, for the second year in a row, the U.S. Department of Education invited a group of exceptional public and private school teachers to Washington to hear their thoughts and to explore ways in which the federal government can work with educators to achieve the National Education Goals. Each 1994 State Teacher of the Year was invited to attend and to bring a partner based on guidelines developed to ensure diverse representation. Private school organizations also nominated teachers to attend the gathering.

Breaking the Tyranny of Time captures the voices of the 1994 Forum teachers—their concrete recommendations and their passion to become partners in all levels of education reform. In choosing to discuss the critical element of time, one of the greatest issues in education reform, the Forum teachers have shown their commitment to participate in every aspect of school improvement. I hope you take seriously the words of these exemplary teachers.

Richard W. Riley
Secretary of Education

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The Tyranny of Time

For most teachers, time is the enemy; meeting the challenges of clock and calendar is a relentless process of speeding up just to keep up. Each day feels like an exercise in subtraction, as essential teaching and learning tasks get squeezed out by other concerns. Year by year, new instructional mandates fragment the curriculum further, deducting precious hours from core learning. Extra duties erode the already insufficient time needed for planning lessons and collaborating with other teachers. Professional development slips under the avalanche of meetings, paperwork, and extracurricular demands. In the face of that tyranny of time, teachers are asked to do the impossible every day—and they do.

Prisoners of Time, the April 1994 report issued by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning, put the issue bluntly:

> *Learning in America is a prisoner of time. For the past 150 years, American public schools have held time constant and let learning vary. The rule, only rarely voiced, is simple: learn what you can in the time we make available....Time is learning's warden. Our time-bound mentality has fooled us all into thinking that schools can educate all of the people all of the time in a school year of 180 six-hour days.... The boundaries of student growth are defined by schedules for bells, buses, and vacations instead of by standards for student learning.* (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, Prisoners of Time. *Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1994, p.7*)

The 119 outstanding teachers of the 1993 Goals 2000 Teacher Forum identified time as the most critical resource for the success of school reform. The 1994 Forum teachers agreed, feeling the same urgency to focus on the challenge of time. In their intense focus sessions in Washington during the 1994 Forum, the teachers centered on two dimensions of the time challenge:

- What time barriers must be overcome to provide more time for teachers to teach and for students to learn?
- How can time be restructured so students have the best chance not just for success but for excellence?

The 1994 Forum teachers spoke passionately from their own experiences, compared strategies, and voiced the solutions they themselves had discovered. From every state, the U.S. territories, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia, each state Teacher of the Year brought another teacher leader as a partner; some were Christa McAuliffe Fellows, some were Presidential Math and Science Awardees, most were from public schools, some taught in private and parochial schools, all were classroom veterans. Every one of them was an expert in the daily and yearly battles with classroom clocks.

"Time can be our friend or our enemy. Right now in educational reform, it is not only our enemy, it is winning....We've got to bring our oppressor—time—over to our side, and start the war from here!"

Becky Dingle
Alston Middle School
Summerville, South Carolina

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Why should I continue to read this document?

To know I'm not alone and **to identify** the time barriers:

- ✓Teacher isolation
- ✓School-day design
- ✓Top-down thinking
- ✓Slowness in responding to research
- ✓Need for family and community involvement
- ✓Inadequate student assessment
- ✓Demand for continual improvement

✓Teacher Isolation

In a time when the most effective private sector companies are insisting on techniques such as teaming, planning, and collaboration as ways to enhance business creativity and productivity, education still keeps teachers isolated in their classrooms. "Teachers have to deal with loneliness," said a teacher from the East Coast. "We need more time to share the good stories with each other, not just the problems." Another Forum teacher pointed out, "The most underutilized resource for American teachers is other teachers."

Teachers want, need, and must have more contact and collaboration with their colleagues, as well as with higher education professionals. Such contact, they said, could provide and promote continuity and cohesiveness between levels of education and could reinforce reform efforts. "Effecting change means teachers acting together," was how one teacher expressed it.

✓School-Day Design

"Unyielding and relentless, the time available in a uniform six-hour day and 180-day year is the unacknowledged design flaw in American education"—that's how *Prisoners of Time* (p.8) focused the problem. If clock and calendar need to be restructured, the teachers were ready to do it, but only if it meant they could use the additional time to plan their work. This was the universal cry of Forum participants.

A deeper reading of the focus group sessions shows, however, that although teachers would definitely restructure the use of time, they had some clear caveats. Districts seeking reform, participants agreed, should also resist the temptation to gobble up every reformist "flavor of the month." Reform's ultimate goal should be to ensure more effective learning.

Participants insisted that the most important time-oriented change is to create uninterrupted planning periods focused on teaching preparation. Developing lessons, coordinating with other teachers, sharing discoveries about how to teach, integrating instruction across disciplines, and extending the use of resources, all crucial to improving instruction, take enormous amounts of time which teachers are being denied.

There is a direct correlation, most teachers said, between planning time and instructional quality. Teachers described often conflicting demands that they experienced as they battled to carve out 15 minutes to think about the impact of today's teaching on tomorrow—let alone on next week's, next month's, or next year's. "I can't think of anything else that has impacted my teaching more than losing the 45 minutes of planning time I used to have. It really affects creativity," said a history and government teacher from the Midwest.

Sometimes when a school reconfigures time so that teachers can do more instructional planning, or creates more time for profes-

sional development activities, parents and others in the community are quick to criticize. Why? There is a persistent belief that teachers are only "working" when they are in front of students. More than one teacher insisted that the myth of face time is crippling to education, and the testimony of teachers is needed to combat it. Teachers do not require more of the same: learning and teaching have changed and so must delivery and presentation.

✓Top-Down Thinking

Who makes the decision about school time and how it's used to teach and learn? More often than not, teachers are not involved in this decision. Practitioners emphatically asked to be partners with administrators in planning the effective use of time. Because teachers know classrooms and students, they recognize that teachers themselves need to help make policy rather than having it made for them. But they recognize that this shift in teacher roles is tough to make. "Sometimes teachers are afraid of change. The devil they know is not as scary as the unknown," a teacher from the Gulf Coast confessed.

A deeper dimension of the reform issue is the recognition that teachers need to become more proactive, not just about the concerns of teachers but on the broad range of reform concerns.

"Teachers lack the confidence to take risks because many administrators won't support them," a Forum teacher from the Deep South said. A colleague from the upper Midwest concurred: "You have to show confidence in teachers if you want them to take chances." There can be no solution to the time question or to any of the challenges of education reform that does not include teachers as policy-making partners.

✓Slowness in Responding to Research

We seem to be living in a time warp. One teacher from a large Midwestern state described the world our kids live in as "light years away from the world we grew up in." Decision makers who are from that old world make policy that seems oblivious to the last two generations of research on how children learn and how teachers should teach to be effective.

Rethinking from the ground up how time is used as an educational resource rather than merely fiddling with the system—that's what many Forum teachers recommended. Minor or major adjustments in the school day or year, as useful as they may be, are no panacea. For example, the sheer arbitrariness of the 40- or 45-minute period, many said, was simply nonsense. Forum participants agreed that strategies for merely recalibrating the measuring sticks for teaching time won't accomplish much when it comes to educational quality, unless they are accompanied by structural changes in how the time is used. These include clearer ideas of what is to be accomplished in the time gained, smaller class sizes, increased parental and community involvement.

"We have to change the dimension of thinking from top-down to bottom-up....We need to have time to make changes, adjustments, and decisions. Certainly AT&T doesn't make lifetime decisions in two hours."

Bonnie Walston
Parkside High School
Salisbury, Maryland

"In my school students have eight 50-minute classes. One day I decided to follow a student around. By the end of the second period, I was ready to jump out of my seat. It's difficult and cruel to force [this pattern] on [students]."

Becky Dingle
Alston Middle School
Summerville, South Carolina

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substantive changes in classroom management, and empowered teachers who can use the time in the ways they believe will benefit their students most. The day and year should not be restructured, they should be reinvented.

✓Need for Family and Community Involvement

A teacher from the Pacific Northwest wished that all those concerned with the education of children could pull together more effectively. "I see schools, parents, and business in different corners," she said. "They need to come out...and talk."

The role of parents in the education of their children cannot be overestimated. Thirty years of research has shown that greater family involvement in children's learning is a critical link to achieving a high-quality education. By becoming involved in their local school community, parents can provide the essential leadership that will lead to improvements in educational opportunities for their children. Getting parents more involved in the basic mission of schools is essential if the barriers to using school time more effectively are to fall, participants agreed. "We've been going to work at 6:30 a.m. and staying until 6:30 p.m. to try to meet with parents...we wanted them to have input on how to best serve their children. But the candle has burned at both ends for too long; we have to have time to plan in order to work with parents," an Eastern Shore high school teacher insisted.

The whole community—from parents to businesses—must make education a top priority. Teachers spoke of the value of school-business partnerships and other volunteer collaboration programs, which they believe help communities understand schools better. Another way to increase teacher visibility and to publicize school achievements is the Teacher for a Day program described by a teacher from South Dakota. Local business leaders were invited to teach in schools for a day. Professors from a nearby college of education taught high school classes for a little "reality therapy" while high school teachers were transformed into professors for a day.

Communication within the community sometimes boils down to good old-fashioned politics, suggested a New England teacher. Her basic sentiment was seconded by a teacher from a Pacific Coast state, who reminded participants of their status as Teachers of the Year. "You have a lot of credibility in your communities," he said, "and you need to be in the forefront of change." Many others expressed the conviction that teachers who had been singled out because of their achievements and professionalism had a responsibility to get out and talk to groups like Rotary and Kiwanis about education reform.

Taxpayers and policy makers still argue sometimes about supplementing the tools of the nineteenth century (textbooks, chalk, and blackboards) with the technologies of the twenty-first (CD-ROMs, modems, and fiber

"Students need more time to just get the 'ah-ha' of recognition before we have to move on to the next thing."

Karla Davis
La Vega Elementary School
Waco, Texas

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optics). Schools must be provided with current technology. No one would think of visiting a doctor who did not use technology to best serve her patients. Why should we expect teachers to do without any technological advantages that would help them to best serve their students?

The scarcity of dollars for time-using and time-saving technologies is only one reflection of education's position on a community's priority list, teachers said. The scarcest resource of all may be time itself. One particularly difficult parental and community attitude, many participants agreed, is the tendency to value extracurricular and outside school activities over academics. In what must be a universal lament among school teachers, one teacher complained that soccer, ballet, swim team, et cetera, all compete for class time.

✓Inadequate Student Assessment

Assessment structures were also identified as prominent barriers. Time to do real assessment is one barrier but artificial grading periods also represent another of school time's prisons. A fine arts teacher from the Midsouth noted the locked-in dates for school grading: "It is an artificial structure to grade every six weeks. It does not work. When it comes to grading a student's acting, it may take a whole year [to have a grade]. For me, it might be better to grade on a semester basis; it may be even better to grade with a fail/pass."

There was broad agreement that teachers have to be trained to assess students in different ways, especially in interdisciplinary contexts, where performance and skill standards are both more fluid and less well developed. Then even more time is necessary because parents, needing to understand how new teaching approaches and contexts "change the assessment game," may feel insecure about things like grade point averages and college admission.

✓Demand for Continual Improvement

In days and months already jammed with impossible demands, how can teachers find time to grow professionally? Yet time for professional development and updating teaching techniques is critical for true school reform. A teacher from the West Coast described the importance of all teachers' professional development: "It needs to be in the contract that teachers are guaranteed so many days for professional development, that they will be guaranteed substitute teachers, and that teachers will be involved in deciding what the in-service will be."

"It is a misuse of time for teachers not to have a telephone in the room and a computer on the desk....We are archaic without a telephone."

Kay Brost
Broadus Elementary School
Broadus, Montana

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What must we do to free our children, our teachers, and our schools from the tyranny of time?

What are some "timely" solutions?

✓**Focus** on student learning as the constant and time as the variable.

✓**Create** more flexibility rather than more instructional time.

✓**Realize** that increasing planning time for teachers is more important for improving instruction than increasing instructional time with students.

✓**Encourage** attitudinal change along with structural change for a stronger academic day.

✓**Involve** teachers as policy-making partners in any solutions to the time problem.

✓**Connect** the issues of time and school reform.

Identifying the barriers of time is one thing; knocking them down and doing something different is another. Forum participants were urged to suggest strategies for overcoming the barriers they identified—not on a one-for-one basis, but in terms that could create a new climate for change.

✓Focus on student learning as the constant and time as the variable.

Ask the right questions in the right order, begged the forum teachers. Three simple questions sum up their strategic thinking:

•What do students need to know and be able to do? Here learning is the constant in education and time the variable.

•How will we get students to where they need to be in their learning? Time, again, is understood in context and not as having more than an instrumental value in education.

•What will we assess and how will we do it? The answer to this question tells us if our ends have been achieved and if our means, which include time, resources, structures, persons, and processes, are adequate to our ends. This way of thinking also has the advantage of providing the right context for the time issue in another way: it makes time a tool for achieving education reform instead of a barrier.

Critical to an overall, strategically effective approach to the time issue, as pointed out by one Mid-Atlantic state teacher, is the inescapable fact that students learn at different rates. This fact has an impact on everything, from classroom management to curriculum design. "We need," she said, "policy changes that allow both the student and the teacher to be flexible...to change the climate and environment of the school."

> ***Recommendation I.*** *Reinvent schools around learning, not time.*
>
> *We recommend a commitment to bring every child in the United States to world-class standards in core academic areas.* (Prisoners of Time, *p.30*)

The deepest educational need, and the most important reform principle, is to find ways to make teaching more effective. Adopting a school day and year that meet instructional needs is thus the best way to "de-tyrannize" the clock and calendar.

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Recommendation II. *Fix the design flaw: Use time in new and better ways.*

We recommend that state and local boards work with schools to redesign education so that time becomes a factor supporting learning, not a boundary marking its limits....At a minimum, fixing the design flaw means recognizing that very young children enter school at very different levels of learning readiness....Above all, fixing the design flaw means that time should be adjusted to meet the individual needs of the learner, rather than the administrative convenience of adults. (Prisoners of Time, *p.31*)

The only way to engage students in their own learning is by having fewer, smaller classes that don't necessarily meet daily. Most of the Forum's secondary school teachers agreed that daily meetings in many classes are unnecessary, but that classes should last longer and their duration should be geared to content. In all, participants were united in insisting that the division of the school day into uniform time periods has no particular basis in learning theory.

Models for the improved use of time are important, not because a given model will work everywhere, but because a particular model can break new ground almost anywhere. Models are simply guides; no single approach will work for every teacher or school.

Adopt a curriculum based on the principle of flexible pacing—one that allows students to move through their learning individually instead of in lock step, that permits them to take the time they need to learn, rather than just move through the material. The flexibility to meet students' learning and developmental needs, and not mere administrative convenience, should provide the rationale for how time is apportioned. Restructuring our priorities should help us design a school day which is more educationally sound than our present one.

✓Create more flexibility rather than more instructional time.

Forum teachers insisted that the key to cracking the time issue, both for individual teachers and for schools, is not just providing more time but having flexibility to use it. "Let us be the instructional managers," the teachers said. "Let us make the decisions about the kinds of professional development we need and how it is acquired."

However, these teachers confessed that flexibility is often something that they achieved only because they instituted changes first and asked questions later. Describing the flexibility of the schedule she designed for at-risk students in an alternative school setting, a teacher from the Midwest

"The current state of teaching is like trying to change a wheel on a car that is going 60 mph. Interdisciplinary teaching is a way to stop the car and change the tire."

Joanne Johnson
Goshen Elementary School
Eugene, Oregon

"I'm interested in modifying teaching styles so they are more compatible with the way the brain processes information...I was able to free up 20 days of class time by eliminating tests and doing continuous assessment."

Jeb Schenck
Hot Springs County High School
Thermopolis, Wyoming

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"Time is the scarcest commodity we have to deal with....Deciding the priorities of how to spend our time in school is the most important decision that will be made about education."

Helen Raucher
Hebrew Academy
Silver Spring, Maryland

"The best time tip I heard was the use of a regular substitute [for staff development time]. It enables the teacher to continue where the substitute left off rather than to reteach the lessons as we teachers usually do."

Jeannie Routsis
Public School 11
Clifton, New Jersey

said. "Administrators find it easier to bestow forgiveness than grant permission." Encouraging risk-taking among teachers could help make things happen as much or more than issuing administrative edicts about changes in policy.

Technology might offer both time and curriculum flexibility, many teachers thought. "For example, notebook computers, with various curriculum software packages, open up new ways to assess and grade students, and free up more time for teachers," a high school social studies teacher from the Midwest said.

✓Realize that increasing planning time for teachers is more important for improving instruction than increasing instructional time with students.

One teacher from the South described how the change to the middle school concept in her district, and with it the move to a common lunch period for teachers, had led to six full days of staff development yearly. The first day of each semester was changed to a teacher planning day and her colleagues can now receive graduate credit for the time they spend planning.

In her school district, an hour early dismissal twice a month was used to support instruction by freeing up time for grade-based planning. Three years of following this plan has resulted in dramatic improvements in student achievement because teachers were given valuable planning time.

In some schools, substitute teachers have become part of an overall strategy to give teachers planning time. Similarly, at a far western high school, a small grant was used to hire adults, often parents, to execute record keeping and other paperwork tasks, thus creating extra time for teachers to plan, to develop special projects, or to do their own instructional research. Teachers in several focus groups suggested that every school should have at least one permanent substitute in the building every day precisel for these purposes.

Recommendation III. *Establish an academic day.*

We recommend that schools provide additional academic time by reclaiming the school day for academic instruction...if American students are to meet world-class standards all children will need more academic time. Reclaiming the academic day will mean providing at least 5.5 hours of core academic instructional time *daily....What this means is obvious: many worthwhile student programs—athletics, clubs, and other activities—will have to be sacrificed unless the school day is lengthened.* (Prisoners of Time, *p.32*)

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✓Encourage attitudinal change along with structural change for a stronger academic day.

All lasting change begins in the minds and hearts of the people making it. Attitudinal changes about time must be as deeply rooted in the community as they are in the school. At the policy level, restructuring how time is used, or extending the school day or year, are changes that require prior support from teachers, parents, and the community. That means developing a persuasive rationale for change and a determined communication campaign. At the building level, a good principal will allow and empower teachers to restructure their own use of time. By the same token, however, teachers have to empower themselves by abandoning the attitude and posture of second-class citizens.

Solutions and strategies will emerge in the classroom or in the context of instructional teams just as readily as they do in the policy directives of school boards or the administrative decisions of principals, and perhaps more so. The perspective most needed, however, is that of time as a resource that can be shaped and reshaped to meet educational needs, rather than as the straitjacket into which teaching and learning have to be stuffed.

But both administrative and community support are needed to make such arrangements work. In a school in one far western state, the principal was supportive in rearranging bus schedules, as were parents and relatives of students, who pitched in to pick up students on the short day. A school in an eastern industrial state created 2.5-hour blocks for grades 1-4 by eliminating pull-outs for special services and bringing special education teachers into the regular classroom. Sometimes the initial resistance to ideas like starting the school-day later can disappear when parents realize that it is easier to arrange their families' morning schedules; in one community, businesses actually liked it because it was less disruptive for their after-school workers.

In districts or schools where block scheduling is the norm, teachers and students find it helps them gain the time they need. The extended time created by block scheduling means teachers can break away from talk and chalk, the instructional day is less fragmented and more focused, and students remain engaged with subject matter for longer periods. The extended student contact does mean that teachers have to be more creative, using time in ways that can appeal to a variety of student learning styles. "Let the needs of the kids drive the process of change," one middle school teacher said.

Manipulating the school's master schedule, departmentalizing subjects, team teaching—adjustments like these have created time and increased teacher competencies in many elementary schools. One teacher from the Deep South, for example, reported that when she moved out of a self-contained classroom into a four-member team, she was able not only to expand her repertoire of teaching

*"We need to change our **mind-set** about making mistakes. **Making mistakes is not** failing. **It's part of the process of** bringing about change."*

Jay Nitschke
New Rockford Central High School
New Rockford, North Dakota

*"**If we have to go** to four periods a day **to improve** teaching, **then** we should....**We** have **to get away from the Carnegie** unit **and we need to look at** restructuring."*

Bonnie Walston
Parkside High School
Salisbury, Maryland

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"Here's a new paradigm of what teachers should be—partners, not pawns."

Anne Jolly
Phillips Preparatory School
Mobile, Alabama

"I have a radical suggestion: what if every principal, assistant principal, and guidance counselor were required to teach courses? This would send a couple of messages: 1) This would put administrators up-to-date with the problems in classrooms; 2) Students would see what the priorities are."

Francis Mustapha
South Side High School
Fort Wayne, Indiana

techniques but also to share them with her colleagues.

One recommended pattern found effective in many schools is using the morning to teach core subjects, such as those stated in the National Education Goals, while reserving afternoons for enhancement subjects and extracurricular activity.

Recommendation IV. *Keep schools open longer to meet the needs of children and communities.*

We recommend that schools respond to the needs of today's students by remaining open longer during the day and that some schools in every district remain open throughout the year....Schools open throughout the year can also provide many services to adults, serving as centers in which community agencies offer adult education, "intergenerational" literacy efforts teaching parents and children together, and programs stressing, for example, parenting or job skills. When the walls of the prison of time are torn down, schools can realize their full potential as community learning centers, vibrant and responsive to the educational needs of citizens of every age. (Prisoners of Time, *p.34*)

The 180-day, 6-hour model appears to be obsolete. In many large cities, for example, where schools are faced with the needs of at-risk children, it makes sense to keep schools open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., all year long. But teachers cannot bear this burden alone; help is needed from parents and community volunteers.

While time is important, Forum participants agreed universally that there is little point in manipulating it for its own sake. Time's real value lies in how it supports teaching and learning, and that means designing new structures to support instruction.

✓Involve teachers as policy-making partners in solutions to the time problem.

No matter what tools were proposed for breaking the tyranny of time, one theme resounded clearly in every discussion and focus group: let teachers be partners in design, policy making, and implementation. "Don't waste our time," begged one teacher. "Value our opinion. We are in the trenches. We know what works with kids." Again teachers asked for time to work in real partnerships with school boards, administrators, curriculum supervisors, and even with state and national departments of education. Education must become more collegial if it is to be effective.

One teacher described the school-based management program her school had adopted. Instructional teams met during the school day while community partners took

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over their classes, using specially prepared lessons. Many other teachers reported that when instructional management is done at the building level, the needs of students and teachers become less homogenized and more visible; this makes it possible for site teams to design specific strategies for both.

Recommendation V. *Give teachers the time they need.*

We recommend that teachers be provided with the professional time and opportunities they need to do their jobs.

The daily working life of most teachers is one of unrelieved time pressure and isolation; they work, largely alone, in a classroom of 25-30 children or adolescents for hours every day. Unlike teachers in many systems overseas, who can take advantage of continuous, daily opportunities for professional development, American teachers have little time for preparation, planning, cooperation, or professional growth....The issue is not simply teachers. It is not just time. The real issue is educational quality. (Prisoners of Time, *p.36*)

In order to be effective policy makers, however, teachers need more time to stay abreast of current trends and content, not for their own benefits but for the sake of their students. Time for preparation, collaboration, and professional development is critical, these Forum teachers said. They offered two professional development benchmarks:

- Encourage collaboration among teachers as a way to magnify and focus the impact of teaching; and
- Make extensive use of mentoring as a professional development model, especially for first-year teachers. In many countries, beginning teachers are deliberately given light teaching loads, so they have ample time to observe experienced and skillful teachers. In this country the opposite is true—new teachers are loaded down.

Recommendation VI. *Invest in technology.*

We recommend that schools seize on the promise of new technologies to increase productivity, enhance student achievement, and expand learning time. (Prisoners of Time, *p.37*)

Whether they come from crowded urban centers or tiny rural communities, teachers feel isolated from one another. To gain perspective to be truly effective policy

"Somewhere the problems facing my district have already been solved by some other school district's creative staff and likewise, we may hold the solution to their problems...get online!"

Johnnie Lyn Bennett
North Warren Regional High School
Blairstown, New Jersey

"I recommend that there be a five-year education degree. During the entire fifth year, the student would be in the classroom with a mentor teacher."

Patrice Buchanan
Thurgood Marshall Elementary School
Newark, Delaware

"We have service centers for technology...staffed by teachers identified for excellence in those areas, who are able to assist you in your classroom."

Earl Hughes
New Haven Elementary School
Union, Kentucky

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"I have learned more when going to visit another classroom where a program is being used with kids than I have from sitting in conferences hearing about the same program."

Deane O'Dell
McGrath School
McGrath, Alaska

"We are all change agents and seed planters....We need to use the media to spread the word about the positive, good things that go on in the classrooms, not just about the violence and gang activity. We need to plant the seed that we are here to service these kids, and get businesses and other stakeholders to join us. We can't do it alone."

Veronica Harts
Fairview Elementary School
Lake Charles, Louisiana

makers, teachers must break their isolation daily—not just for occasional workshops or meetings based on someone else's agenda. In small states, communication is relatively easy for those who take the trouble; people hear quickly what is happening elsewhere through meetings and personal networks. But many broader-range communication tools, teachers said, are neither readily available nor encouraged.

One successful reform strategy that impacts significantly both time and overall reform issues involves telephones. Teachers yearn for an "old" technology available to very few teachers—a telephone at one's desk—linked by voice mail to every parent and by modem to the Internet. But even providing basic resources for time-saving and time-expanding technologies is a district-by-district struggle. More than a decade ago, computers promised to rid teachers and administrators of mundane record keeping, permitting them to spend more time designing instructional programs for their students. Yet even easy telephone access, routine in homes and in businesses, is rare for teachers, who must run down a flight of stairs or wait until a lunch break to make a parent call or arrange for a community resource.

A different use is being made of education technology in one southeastern state: a statewide, on-line information network provides access to information for and from other teachers. This network could link teachers to others within and outside their communities.

Flexibility and funding to attend conference are important for every teacher, but being able to visit other schools is equally critical. A mid-Atlantic state teacher noted that conference-going teachers need to be alert to the innovations they learn about away from home. "It is easier to sell something when it's working someplace else."

Another communication arena where teachers, time, and technology can come together is in reaching out to the wider community. If teachers are to be a vital link in education policy shaping, then their communities must know what is happening in schools and why.

An important element in any communication strategy is to work closely with the community, according to a teacher from one mountain state. In sparsely populated rural states as well as congested urban areas, access to interactive television, public television, and, increasingly, to E-mail is helping to fill communication gaps. Many schools, for example, are developing their own programs for local cable.

Such approaches can go a long way toward changing attitudes simply by filling an information vacuum, or by helping parents and others in the community understand the thinking that shapes educational choices at the building level. One forum teacher urged her colleagues not to underestimate the power of the media to effect change. "Our school administration always wants to look good," she said, the implication being that

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this disposition could be used to refocus public attitudes. Part of the communication task involving the community is raising teacher visibility. One teacher recommended involvement in scouting and coaching as an excellent way for teachers to become more community oriented.

✓Connect the issues of time and school reform.

While the problems of time and school reform are national, the solutions are uniquely local. A community's schools must again become its pride and its priority. Some even suggested that schools should return to an earlier age, when they were the center of each local community. An elementary school teacher from the Midwest suggested that schools might again provide one-stop shopping for everything, from education to health care services—a recommendation that has also been advanced by the Time and Learning Commission.

Virtually every focus group maintained that making the link between communication strategies and changing attitudes is crucial, not just for breaking the tyranny of time but also for successful education reform overall. The common public perception is that teachers have free time, and that anything they do outside a classroom does not constitute teaching.

Recommendation VII. *Develop local action plans to transform schools.*

We recommend that every district convene local leaders to develop action plans that offer different school options and encourage parents, students, and teachers to choose among them.

School reform cannot work if it is imposed on the community top-down. Genuine, long-lasting reform grows from the grassroots....Districts of any size, with a sense of vision, boldness, and entrepreneur-ship can experiment with block scheduling, team teaching, longer days and years, and extending time with new distance-learning technologies.

No community in the United States is so small or impoverished that it cannot benefit from an examination of how it uses time....(Prisoners of Time, *p.38)*

Teachers and school administrators can change these perceptions by doing what they do best—educating the public that there is much more to teaching than time spent with students. One does not criticize doctors, after all, for reading professional journals or going to medical meetings. To change it, we must change what we call it, suggested a teacher of the homeless. "Change the title from teaching day to

"Teachers need to get gently mouthy. They need to make their feelings known to the right people."

Margaret Thiel
McGill Elementary School
McGill, Nevada

"If you don't toot the horn for your own kids, no one else will. I call politicians, business people, other community leaders."

Lori Urogdy Eiler
Shaw High School
East Cleveland, Ohio

"I use every resource available to ensure that there are no missed opportunities resulting from failure to make contact with someone I knew was available to help me."

Gail Tuckman
Abrams Hebrew Academy
Yardley, Pennsylvania

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"Teachers must commit to long-term personal investment in change. Once I thought I would be a Teacher of the Year for a year, but now I realize that I will be a Teacher of the Year for always."

Virginia Freyermuth
Duxbury Junior/Senior High School
Duxbury, Massachusetts

"We [teachers] have to become articulate and let others know what our students are doing. We have to get into the political arena. We may fumble at the beginning, but we can get better. We also have to get parents on our side. Once they see that certain changes benefit their children, they become the best advocates."

Cheri Skurdall
North County Union High School
Newport, Vermont

working day." Such a simple expedient of changing the term could break down misconceptions of how teachers actually spend their time.

By professionalizing their own attitudes about their own work, teachers could help change public attitudes. As one teacher from the Deep South put it, "Teachers need to be more positive about their profession, promoting its advantages and contributions."

Part of professionalization must mean taking a long, hard, administrative look at the non-classroom tasks teachers are often required to do. School districts and principals need help in finding alternative ways to keep these tasks from claiming valuable time for teaching and, especially, for planning.

Recommendation VIII. *Share the responsibility: Finger pointing and evasion must end.*

We recommend that all of our people shoulder their individual responsibilities to transform learning in America....In America's great education debate we find too often a belief that the solution is up to the government or "the system." Nothing could be further from the truth. It is up to us. Most of what needs to be done can only be done by the people most directly involved. (Prisoners of Time, *p.40)*

The teachers who came to Washington, D.C. reminded each other that restructuring the ways schools use time, and indeed, education reform in general, require patience. We are involved in a long-term process—20 to 25 years—teachers told one another, and it doesn't help to get discouraged when things don't happen overnight. Teachers need to encourage each other to share in this vision and to work towards it.

In most cases, it takes at least one generation to bring about structural and attitudinal changes that have staying power. The chief assets in the change process are an alert eye for opportunities, quick reaction time to take advantage of them, and the durability and tenacity to stay the course. Progress, not perfection, is the goal.

The teachers who participated in the 1994 Goals 2000 Teacher Forum took home some fresh perceptions on the vulnerabilities of the system and some strategic insights on how to address challenges, both in the schools where they work and the communities where they live. But perhaps above all, the lesson was one of their own solidarity.

The fact that so many teachers, working so far apart, could look the tyranny of the clock in the face, and measure its days, was more than gratifying; it was inspiring. Time need not be a tyrant; it, after all, is our greatest resource. The Forum teachers hope that like all tyrannies, this one also lives on borrowed time.

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"Sharing a vision is the beginning of implementing a dream...one classroom at a time. I feel connected to people with a vision that could change the future of a lot of children, even the future of a nation."

Anne Jolly
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"A two-hour late starting time, once a month, frees up time for staff development and planning that allows staff to explore innovative educational ideas."

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"We're chopping up the day too much for students. I would like to have more flexibility to allow students to be involved in the planning of their own lessons without worrying about the clock."

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"In West Africa, the idea is that we are masters of time. In the United States, we are controlled by time, but many things are not done on time."

Francis Mustapha
South Side High School
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"One reason we have so little planning time is because we know students need more school time, and we often give our planning time up to spend more time with students."

Barbara Renfrow-Baker
Woodridge Elementary School
Bellevue, Washington

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"Teachers are prisoners of time and a lot of the bars we're operating behind are established by non-educators."

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"Policy decisions should come from the best possible people, the people with the most practical experience: those in the classroom now."

Jean Ditillo
O'Hara Elementary School
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

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"We need to share with each other, our successes and programs that work, across the state and the nation."

Marlene Hirata
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